

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1078

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6163

NODIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT - REF A)

FOR ATHERTON FROM SEELYE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US, AMER

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION THAT WE EVACUATE AMERICANS FROM
LEBANON

REF: (A) STATE 172302, (B) STATE 17255, (C) BEIRUT 6084,
(D) BEIRUT 6151

1. SINCE MY ASSESSMENT OF THREE DAYS AGO (BEIRUT 6084) TO EFFECT
THAT TIME HAD NOT RPT NOT YET COME TO CLOSE DOWN EMBASSY, IN INTERIM
THERE HAVE BEEN FOUR FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS WHICH NECESSITATE A
RECONSIDERATION OF THIS JUDGEMENT:

2. PRINCE FAHD HAS MADE STRONG RECOMMENDATION THAT WE PULL OUT
WITHIN TWO WEEKS. I RESPECT HIS JUDGEMENT, PARTICULARLY SINCE SAUDIS
ARE IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH SYRIANS AND EGYPTIANS, AS WELL AS IN
CONTACT
WITH PLO. FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD HAS JUST BEEN TO DAMASCUS
AND HIS IMPRESSIONS OF DAMASCUS MOOD MAY WELL BE INFLUENCING FAHD'S
ASSESSMENT.

3. PROTECTIVE SERVICES AT EMBASSY ARE INCREASINGLY
PROBLEMATIC. AS REPORTED YESTERDAY IN BEIRUT 6151, LEBANESE
ARAB ARMY GUARDDETACHMENT IN FRONT OF EMBASSY HAS BEEN REDUCED,
SECRET

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AS HAS SIZE OF PLO ESCORT. AS PLO AND LEBANESE LEFTISTS SUFFER
MORE REVERSES, POSSIBILITY OF LOSING THIS LAST-RESORT PROTECTION
BECOMES SERIOUS.

4. WE GET INCREASING REPORTS OF SYRIAN PLANS TO ATTACK WEST BEIRUT IN AUGUST. WHETHER ACCURATE OR NOT, THEY CANNOT BE IGNORED. ALSO THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT MARONITE CHRISTIANS FLUSHED WITH VICTORY, MIGHT TAKE A BASH AT THIS AREA.

5. MOST ACUTE CONSIDERATION IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE, WHICH MAY BECOME CRITICAL, AS RESULT OF MAJOR DAMAGE DONE TO SIDON REFINERY IN LAST COUPLE OF DAYS, IS REAL PROSPECT OF DRYING UP OF OUR FUEL SUPPLY. UNLESS SOURCES OF SUPPLY ARE DEVELOPED, WE CAN CONTINUE OPERATIONS ONLY FOR UP TO THIRTY DAYS. FURTHERMORE, EVEN IF WE CAN GET A CUT OF WHAT IS LEFT AT THE SIDON TANK FARM, REMAINING SIDON CAPACITY IS GOOD FOR ONLY TWENTY MORE DAYS.

6. ACCORDINGLY, I AM FORCED TO CONCLUDE, VERY, VERY RELUCTANTLY, THAT WE MUST PLAN TO CLOSE THIS EMBASSY AND EVACUATE ALL POSSIBLE AMERICAN CITIZENS AND CONCERNED FOREIGN NATIONALS. WE ARE IN PROCESS OF DEVELOPING SCENARIO, WHICH WILL BE SUBJECT OF SEPTEL. WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD ALLOW OURSELVES UP TO A WEEK. BECAUSE OF SHORTAGE OF GASOLINE AND LONG EXPOSURE TO RISK OF SOME 500 - 1,000 AMERICANS BEING CONVOYED TO DAMASCUS, WE ARE INCLINED TO OPT FOR SEA EVACUATION. IN ANTICIPATION OF THIS AND PENDING OUR FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS IN SEPTEL, SUGGEST DEPT COMMENCE CONTINGENCY PLANNING.

7. MOST IMPORTANT NEXT STEP IS TO "CLEAR" THIS UPCOMING MAJOR OPERATION WITH PLO. WE WOULD NOT RPT NOT INTEND TO DIVULGE OUR INTENTION TO CLOSE DOWN UNTIL WE HAD ADVANCE PLO COORDINATION. I CANNOT OVEREMPHASIZE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING CLOSELY WITH PLO. IT MAY NOT BE AS EASY AS LAST TIME BECAUSE PLO IS TAKING BEATING ON ALL FRONTS. ALSO, THEY MAY NOT BE TOO HAPPY TO SEE US GO. (AFTER ALL, THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO USE US AS HOSTAGE IN FUTURE.) THEREFORE, ONCE DEPT APPROVES MY RECOMMENDATION TO CLOSE DOWN AND EVACUATE, IT WILL WANT TO GET SADAT AND KHALID TO WEIGH IN WITH ARAFAT. IT WOULD ALSO BE HELPFUL IF I WERE AUTHORIZED TO SEE ABU IYAD ON THIS VITAL MATTER.

8. I HAVE DISCUSSED FOREGOING WITH HEADS OF AUB AND AUH. THEY
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ACCEPT MY RECOMMENDATION, AND THEY INTEND TO DO THEIR BEST TO LEAVE LEBANESE ADMINISTRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE BEHIND WHICH MIGHT HAVE REASONABLE CHANCE OF KEEPING THESE TWO INSTITUTIONS LIMPING ALONG. THIS WILL BE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT IN CASE OF AUH.

9. WE PLAN TO STOP CONVOY FROM DAMASCUS SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW, UNLESS YOU INDICATE OTHERWISE. WE PLAN TO SEND OUR CONVOY TO DAMASCUS AS PLANNED. ACTION REQUESTED. YOUR APPROVAL TO MOVE AHEAD ON THIS COURSE OF ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
SEELYE

SECRET

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